

Legislative Advocacy

Bill Jordan, M.A.
Deputy Director



New Mexico State Legislature

- Meets for a 60 day session on odd numbered years to do ALL business.
- Meets for a 30 day session on even numbered years for budget issues only, plus whatever the Governor wants.
- Meets between regular sessions for interim committee hearings to hear reports on past actions and to prepare for the next session.

Representation

- Senators represent about 40,000 people, (or about 22,000 who vote).
- Representatives represent about 24,000 people (or about 13,000 who vote).

State Government Elections

- Governor & Lt. Governor are elected every four years.
- All 42 State Senators are elected every 4 years (2 years after the Governor)
- All 70 members of the House of Representatives are elected every 2 years.

Bills, Memorials & Resolutions

- A BILL is a change in law or an appropriation
- A MEMORIAL is passed to study an issue and obtain more information
- A RESOLUTION is a proposal to amend the constitution by taking the proposed amendment to the voters

How a BILL becomes law

- Proposal is presented to an interim committee or legislator
- A supporter is enlisted as the bill sponsor
- A bill is drafted by Legislative Council Services
- The bill is introduced in the House or Senate or both
- The bill is heard in Committee hearings
- After passing in Committees, the Bill is debated and voted on by the entire House or Senate
- If passed, then it goes to the other body for the same process of Committee hearings and a vote of the entire body
- If passed by both chambers, it goes to the Governor for his signature or veto

Why advocate?

- Constituents/Voters matter to elected officials
- Your credibility, knowledge, caring
- Elected officials need and want your expertise
- YOU have a vote and a voice, children don't
- Policymakers do listen
- The squeaky wheel gets the oil
- When you advocate for change, you change

When?

- During a campaign to influence the agenda
- After the campaign to influence priorities
- Before a legislative session... because they have time to listen
- During a legislative session
- After a legislative session... to thank them or express your disappointment with their votes

Who?

- Your own elected officials
- Committee members
- Committee Chairs
- Legislative leadership
- Legislative staff and analysts
- Department officials and analysts
- General public thru the media

How?

- Personal or group visits
- Personal letters
- Phone calls
- Faxes
- Emails
- Letters to the Editor and Op-Ed pieces
- Editorial Board meetings
- Press conferences, press releases
- Radio talk shows
- Testimony at Committee hearings

Stay on message

- Develop your *message*
- YOU *frame* the message, define the debate
- Stay on message
- Repeat your *sound bite*
- *Spin* the story the way you want it
- *Hook* the issue on to a current story
- Know what NOT to say

Do's

- Be UNITED and well ORGANIZED
- Make an appointment
- Be quick with gratitude, but slow to criticize
- Be courteous and respectful
- Use BOTH data and personal stories
- Be concise and to the point
- Make it SIMPLE
- ASK for what you want
- Report back

Don'ts

- Be late
- Be argumentative, arrogant, condescending or threatening
- Exaggerate
- Overwhelm them with too much data
- Take more time than you were offered
- NEVER burn bridges. Leave the door open for further discussion, on this or other issues.

What to do BEFORE the legislative process begins

- Agree on priorities. Be UNITED.
- Document the need. Use EVIDENCE-BASED advocacy.
- Enlist your allies. Identify your opponents.
- KNOW your weak points. Know the opposition.
- CREATE a good bill.
- Develop both factual and emotional arguments.
- SELECT bill sponsors.
- CONTACT key players.
- PLAN a media campaign.
- ORGANIZE & MOBILIZE supporters.

Mobilize Community Advocates

- Identify & invite ALL stakeholders
- Get a commitment from key players
- Jointly develop policy briefs and fact sheets.
- Develop phone/fax/email action alerts
- Activate members to make visits & calls
- Share decision-making & keep members informed
- Evaluate progress

“Each of the great social achievements of recent decades has come about not because of government proclamations, but because people organized, made demands, and made it good politics to respond.”

-James Grant, former Executive Director of UNICEF

Definition of Direct Lobbying

- COMMUNICATION with a LEGISLATOR or STAFF to
- EXPRESS A VIEW or MAKE AN ASK on SPECIFIC LEGISLATION

Definition of Indirect Lobbying (Grassroots Lobbying)

- COMMUNICATION with the GENERAL PUBLIC * that
- EXPRESSES A VIEW on SPECIFIC LEGISLATION
- And includes a CALL TO ACTION
- *If communication is with "members" it is considered Direct Lobbying

What is NOT lobbying

- Nonpartisan analysis
- A report that contains a full and fair discussion of the issue, is broadly disseminated, expresses a view and includes an indirect call to action
- Request in writing for T/A from a Legislative Committee Chair
- Anything that doesn't cost the organization money

The Role of the Lobbyist

- Enlists the bill sponsors and gets the bill drafted
- Tracks the bill daily, from drafting, to introduction, to committee hearings, to floor votes, to committee reports, to final signing by the Governor. (Tracks votes.)
- Visits with legislators before votes to garner support.
- Gets supporters to committee hearings
- Keeps coalition members informed and vice versa.
- Prepares and delivers testimony at hearings
- Knows the opposition and their arguments & is prepared with response
- Thanks legislators, allies & coalition members

To Track Legislation

- The official web site of the NM legislature: www.legis.state.nm.us
- Web site for New Mexico Voices for Children: www.nmvoices.org

To find info on bills and legislators:

- www.legis.state.nm.us
 - To find a legislator, click on **FIND YOUR LEGISLATOR**
 - To find a bill, click on **BILL FINDER**
 - To find the schedule of committee hearings and the agenda for the Senate and House floor votes, click on **AGENDAS/CALENDARS**

NM Legislative Phone Numbers

- Governor 505-476-2200
- Lt. Governor 505-476-2250
- Legislature 505-986-4300

Congressional Contact Info

- Sen. Jeff Bingaman 202-224-5521
<http://bingaman.senate.gov>
- Sen. Tom Udall 202-244-6621
<http://tomudall.senate.gov>
- Rep. Martin Heinrich 202-225-6316
<http://heinrich.house.gov>
- Rep. Harry Teague 202-225-2365
<http://teague.house.gov>
- Rep. Steve Pearce 202-225-2365
<http://lujan.house.gov>

“WHATEVER YOU CAN DO,
BEGIN IT!
BOLDNESS HAS GENIUS,
POWER
AND MAGIC IN IT!”

- Goethe

“Never before has there been a
constituency so popular,
but with so little political clout.”

*-Senator Christopher Dodd
speaking of children*

AstroTurf Lobbying

- A tactic used by outside special interest groups who “manufacture” what appears to be a grass-roots effort